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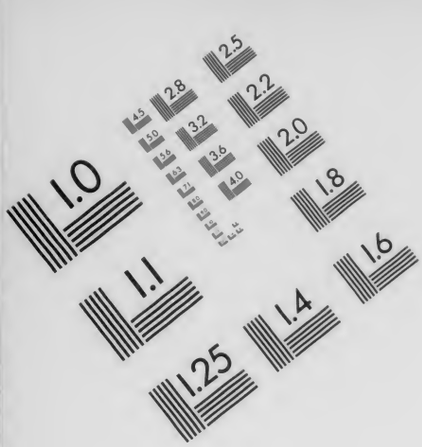

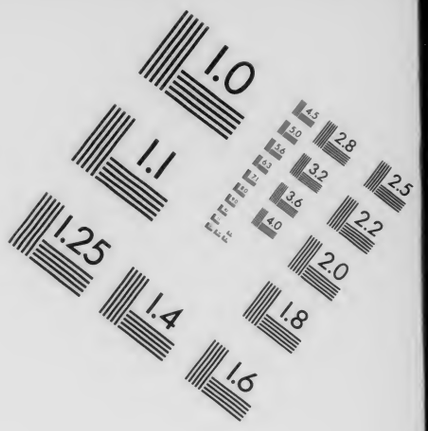

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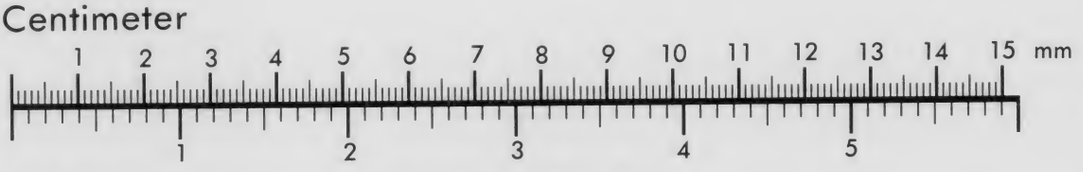

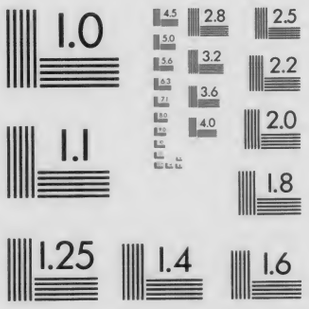

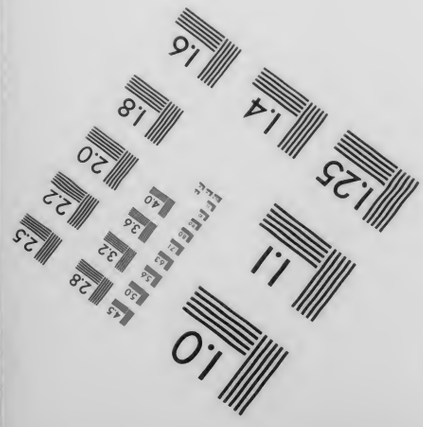

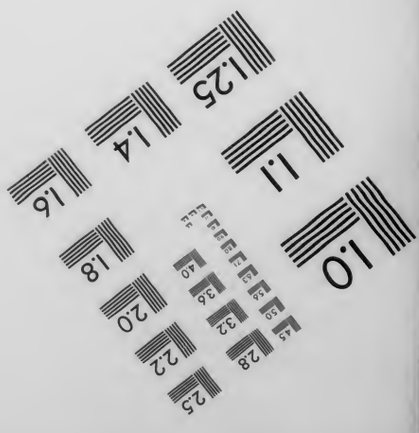

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No. 11

TO THE

BRITISH NATION.

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THOUGHTS ON THE CONVENTION BILL.

I MOST heartily congratulate my country on the vigour that is diſplayed in oppoſition to the two horrid and helliſh bills which at preſent engage the attention of, what is called, the Parliament of theſe realms. Indeed I ſhould have been inexpreſſibly ſurpriſed if their paſſing into laws had not met with the execration which it is apparent they receive from the independent and virtuous part of the community. What ſupport they experience is derived from the corrupt and profligate, from placemen, penſioners, contractors, jobbers

and agents. That ſupport is natural: ſo is the aid and countenance given to them by men of ill-gotten wealth, purſe-proud ſycophants, and abominable oppreſſors. They, fearful of their conduct and meaſures being canvaſſed, raiſe an alarm (the old artifice revived) that the conſtitution is endangered by popular meetings: but the fact is, they have the mortification to ſee that the people are rouſing from their lethargy, and are determined to have an end put to the licenciouſneſs of the court, the rapacity and depredations of an abhorrid adminiſtration, and the horrible depravity of the ariſtocratic faction whoſe cabals create diſcord and diſtreſs throughout the nation.

The two bills which are now agitating in the Houſe of Commons, are a compound of villainy, injuſtice and cruelty. They are written in characters of blood: and I have no heſitation in ſaying, bloody-minded are thoſe who introduce and ſupport ſuch accurſed laws. The reign of Charles II. is referred to for an example how to treat the turbulent and diſaffected, and are called 'good times'; how can they be termed 'good' when ſuch liberticidal laws were enacted? It would have been more conſiſtent with the views and intentions of miniſters, had they taken for their precedents ſome of the ſanguinary laws of that bigotted tyrant, his brother,

as I am perſuaded prototypes of Judge Jefferies and Colonel Kirke would not be difficult to be procured from the deſperate gang of their adherents to execute any horrid meaſures they might think proper to adopt. Is it a good thing to deprive Engliſhmen of their natural and invaluable rights, and upon the ruins of thoſe rights raiſe the regal power up to deſpotiſm? I ſay let the miniſtry take care what they do: they may be ignorantly furniſhing inſtructions and precedents for the times of which they may perſonally feel the effects. 'Action produces re-action:' the bow if too tenſe may burſt the ligament by which it is reſtrained, and recoil upon the hands of the injudicious performer. The old French government ought to learn them how impolitic arbitrary edicts are, and the manner in which they operate. I call them edicts becauſe it is obvious Parliament is nothing more than a regiſter office for the crown.

It is not neceſſary for me to expatiate upon the two nefarious and infernal bills, as their alarming tendency has been copiouſly diſcuſſed; and I rejoice to obſerve how generally they are reprobated. But what muſt excite the horror and deteſtation of every man, not loſt to every humane ſentiment—not bereft of the tender and ſoft ſenſations which are conſidered to be inſeparable from human kind, is, that diabolical clauſe,

propoſed by the ſolicitor general, that whoever ſhall remain one hour after proclamation made, and not diſperſe, to be guilty of felony without benefit of clergy!!! A refinement upon cruelty! and fit only to be contemplated by the barbarous ſavage that propoſed it. But, alas! there appears to have been *eighty* wretches actuated by the ſame ſavage principles!

Before I conclude, it may not be improper to remark, that the precedent from which they pretend to frame theſe bills, viz. that in the ſecond year of Charles II's. reign, does not go to the extent of the preſent, although at that time he would not conſider himſelf ſecurely ſeated on the throne, the penalty in that bill was, if any perſon incited or ſtirred up the people to hatred or diſlike of the king and conſtitution 'were rendered incapable of holding any employment in church or ſtate;' but by the preſent bill it is *tranſportation for ſeven years!* I ſhall finiſh with exhorting you, my countrymen, to read and digeſt well the fundamental of your rights and liberties: the compact between the people and the King; you will then judge whether theſe two bills do not virtually annul and abrogate the *bill of rights* which I here ſubjoin.

ART. I.

THE BILL OF RIGHTS.

ART. 1. That the pretended power of diſpenſing laws, or the execution of laws by regal authority, without the conſent of Parliament is illegal.

2. That the pretended power of diſpenſing with laws, or the execution of laws, by regal authority, as it has been aſſumed and executed of late, is illegal.

3. That the commiſſion for erecting the court of commiſſioners for eccleſiaſtical cauſes, and all other commiſſions and courts of like nature, are illegal and pernicious.

4. That the levying of money for the uſe of the Crown, by pretence of prerogative, without grant of Parliament for a longer time, or in any other manner the ſame is, or ſhall be granted, is illegal.

5. That it is the right of the Subject to petition the King, and all commitments or proſecutions for ſuch petitioning, is illegal.

6. That the raiſing or keeping a ſtanding army within the kingdom in time of peace, unleſs it be with the conſent of Parliament, is againſt law.

7. That the Subjects being Proteſtants may have arms for their defence, ſuitable to their conditions, and as allowed by law.

8. All

8. All elections of Members of Parliament ought to be free.

9. That the freedom of ſpeech, or debates and proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or queſtioned in any court or place, out of parliament.

10. That exceſſive bail ought not to be required, nor exceſſive fines impoſed, nor cruel nor unuſual puniſhments inflicted. (How much this article is attended to let poor Yorke's caſe anſwer.)

11. That jurors ought to be duly impannelled and returned; and jurors which paſs verdicts on men for high treaſon ought to be freeholders.

12. That all grants and promiſes of fines and forfeitures of particular perſons before conviction are illegal and void.

13. And that, for redreſs of all grievances, and for the amending, ſtrengthening and preſerving of the laws Parliaments ought to be held frequently.

And

And they do claim, demand and inſiſt upon all and ſingular the premiſes as their undoubted rights and liberties; and no declarations, judgements, doings or proceedings to the prejudice of the people, in any of the ſaid premiſes, ought in any wiſe to be drawn hereafter into conſequence or example.

COSMOPOLITE.

November 28, 1795.